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ABSTRACT

A sex-role stereotype questionnaire, consisting of 38 bipolar personality trait items and regarding appropriate careers and social roles for men and women, was administered to 62 elementary teachers who volunteered to complete it. Teachers were instructed to describe their ideal female and male adult. This study sought to determine if teachers, following the general tendency, would value stereotypic masculine traits more highly than feminine traits, and perhaps reinforce in their students a view of society that accepts a double standard for male and female behavior. It was expected that the teachers would not stereotype by sex, but would describe both male and female ideals as characterized by the 27 socially valued masculine stereotypic traits and the 11 socially valued feminine stereotypic traits. Using an established measure of sex-role stereotyping, the teachers described ideal adult males and females as being alike on 37 of the 38 traditionally sex-specific bipolar personality traits. The profile of an ideal adult emerged as more androgynous than sex-stereotyped. The study suggests that some teachers have begun to question the rigid sex-role stereotypes which have been a persistent feature of the culture. (JD)

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WHAT DO TEACHERS REALLY WANT?: SEX-ROLE STEREOTYPING AND THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHER

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Abstract

A sex-role stereotype questionnaire, consisting of 38 bipolar personality trait items, was administered to 82 elementary classroom teachers who had volunteered to participate in a federal project to change pupils' attitudes regarding appropriate careers and social roles for men and women. Teachers were instructed to describe their ideal female and male. Teacher responses are discussed and compared to earlier findings for subjects from the general population. Volunteer teachers did not stereotype by sex on 37 of the 38 items. Classroom teachers described an androgynous ideal adult who was characterized by 18 traditionally masculine traits, 19 traditionally feminine traits, and only one trait which was sex-specific. Teachers redefined, for 10 of the 38 bipolar items, which pole was more socially desirable. Implications of the results for educators are discussed.

What do Teachers Really Want?: Sex-role Stereotyping and the Elementary Classroom Teacher

Teachers are only human. Like other members of society, they hold certain beliefs about what males and females are like as well as what males and females should ideally be like. It goes without saying that, in general, teachers' beliefs about their male and female students, both real and in the ideal, are influenced by the sex-role stereotypes of the dominant culture.

The nature and extent of sex-role stereotyping by the general population has been well documented. Studies have repeatedly demonstrated a remarkable consensus, regarding the characteristics of both typical and ideal males and females, among subjects who differ by sex, age, marital status, level of education, and religion (Broverman et al., 1972). For example, Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, and Broverman (1968) found that research subjects consistently describe the "typical adult female" and the "typical adult male" as being characterized by opposite poles on 38 separate bipolar personality trait items. The "typical adult male," for example, has traditionally been characterized as: aggressive, loud, active, logical, competitive, independent, blunt, not interested in his own appearance, sloppy in habits,and not able to express tender feelings. By contrast, the "typical adult female" has been characterized traditionally by the opposite personality traits: not aggressive, quiet, passive, illogical, not competitive, dependent, tactful, interested in her own appearance, neat in habits, and able to express tender feelings.

Research has also shown that people consistently display a tendency to place higher social value on stereotypic masculine traits than on feminine traits. Rosenkrantz and his associates (1968) asked subjects to rate which pole, for the 38 distinguishing bipolar items, was more <u>socially desirable</u> for the

population at large (i.e., irrespective of sex). It was found that the masculine pole was judged to be more socially desirable for 27 items and the feminine pole for only 11 items. That is, the personality traits which are used to describe the typical male (aggressive, independent, active, logical, etc.) are much more likely to be socially valued than are the opposite traits which are used to describe the stereotypic female.

In an additional study of interest, Elman, Press, and Rosenkrantz (1970) found that subjects not only acknowledged stereotypic difference between men and women but had even idealized these differences. Using the bipolar personality trait items, it was found that both male and female subjects described the ideal man as being characterized by the masculine stereotypic traits and the ideal woman by the feminine stereotypic traits. Thus, subjects reported that the ideal woman was less self-confident, less adventurous, less objective, and has greater difficulty making decisions than the ideal man while the ideal man was less religious, less tactful, less gentle, less aware of the feelings of others, and less talkative than the ideal woman.

But what does this have to do with classroom teachers? Many concerned educators believe that to the extent classroom teachers, the primary agents of socialization within the school setting, accept and hold the societal sex-stereotyped attitudes regarding appropriate and ideal female and male roles and behavior, they may serve to perpetuate apparent differences between the sexes. It is generally believed that teacher sex-role stereotyping may contribute to a double standard which prohibits them from acting to promote the full development of all students, female and male. As educators have increasingly accepted the social and legal mandate to rid the schools of discrimination on the basis of sex, they have become increasingly concerned about teachers' attitudes.

In order to study the nature and extent of sex-role stereotyping by practicing elementary classroom teachers, the author administered a modified version of the Rosenkrantz et al. sex-role Stereotype Questionnaire (containing the 38 bipolar personality trait items) to a total of 82 kindergarten through sixth grade level teachers. The teachers were instructed to describe their ideal female and ideal male.

While the 82 teachers were all currently employed in the same suburban school district (State of Washington, 1974-75) in one of the districts' 31 elementary schools, they did not represent a random sample of K-6 teachers in the district. The teachers who participated in the study had all volunteered to participate in a federal project which had as a main goal to change pupils' attitudes regarding appropriate careers and social roles for men and women. In the vernacular of the women's movement, the teachers who volunteered to participate in the project might best be described as having a "raised consciousness" (but not necessarily as being feminists). The volunteer teacher group consisted of 65 females and 17 males; ages ranged from 20-64 years of age with the median age falling into the interval 36-40 years of age.

Because the teachers in this study had volunteered to participate in the project designed to change pupils' sex-stereotyped attitudes, it was anticipated that the teachers would not themselves stereotype by sex as had subjects in all previously reported studies. It was, however, hypothesized that the teachers would describe both ideal males and ideal females as being characterized primarily by the male stereotypic traits, that is, by those traits which past studies had found to be described as more socially valued than the female stereotypic traits. Specifically, it was expected that the teachers would not stereotype by sex, but that they would describe both ideal females and males as characterized by the 27 socially valued masculine stereotypic traits and

and the 11 socially valued feminine stereotypic traits.

In the original Rosenkrantz et al. study, the directions to the subjects were as follows: "Imagine that you are going to meet a person for the first time and the only thing you know in advance is that the person is an adult male [female]." In the modified version of the sex-role Stereotype Questionnaire used in this study, the teachers were instructed to "Imagine the boys [girls] in your class as adults. Ideally, to what extent would you hope that, as men [as women] they would be characterized by the following traits?" Each questionnaire consisted of two complete sets of the 38 bipolar items (one for rating ideal males and one for rating ideal females), and each trait was presented as a continuum from 1.0 to 7.0; the teacher could indicate any point between 1.0 and 7.0 as characterizing the ideal man [woman].

For example:

Very Sneaky Very Direct

1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7

Results and Discussion

Two means were computed for each of the 38 bipolar items; one was the mean teacher rating for the "ideal man" on that item, and one was the mean teacher rating for the "ideal woman".[1] A two-tailed t-test was performed for each of the 38 pairs of means. As a group, teachers did not tend to stereotype by sex; there was no significant difference in the mean score for ideal adult male and the mean score for ideal adult female for 30 of the 38 traditionally stereotypic items. Two-tailed t-tests of the difference between means for ideal male and ideal female were significant for items (see Table 1) 1, 5, 12, 15, 23, 25, 35, and 36 ($p < .05$). All significant differences were in the direction of established sex stereotypes with the exception of item 5 ("talkative"). But for all of the items for which there was a significant difference in mean rating, by sex of ideal, both ideal male and ideal female were located between the mid-point (4.0) and the same end of the

continuum. Thus, even where there was a significant difference in mean ratings, both ideal males and ideal females were described as being characterized by the same pole of the bipolar item.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here]

Table 2 presents the personality traits which teachers used to describe both their ideal man and ideal woman. On only one item (24) was the teachers' ideal adult personality trait sex-specific; that is, the teachers' mean score for the ideal man was on one side of the mid-point of the continuum (toward the stereotypic masculine pole) while the mean score for the ideal woman was on the other side of the mid-point. Interestingly, the difference in the two means for item 24 was not significant ($p. < .05$). For each of the teacher valued traits listed in Table 2, an indication is made as to whether that is a traditionally masculine or feminine trait and whether or not it has traditionally been considered to be a socially desirable trait.

A quick inspection of Table 2 reveals that the teachers' ideal adult, be that adult a male or a female, is characterized by a blend of stereotypic male traits and female traits and by a combination of traditionally socially valued and non-socially valued traits. The teachers' ideal adult is described as possessing 18 stereotypic masculine traits (17 of which are traditionally socially valued) and 19 stereotypic feminine traits (10 of which are traditionally socially valued). The teachers stereotyped by sex on only one item, "excitability in minor crisis (24)".

It is worth noting that the teachers in this study redefined what is ideal, and thus socially valued, for 10 of the 38 traits; in 9 of these breaks from tradition the move was toward making

the traditional feminine stereotype the new ideal (items 2, 3, 9, 13, 17, 27, 28, 29, 36) while the reverse was true for only one trait (item 27).

Conclusions

What does this all mean? The study documents that some teachers have begun to question the rigid sex-role stereotypes which have been a persistent feature of our culture. Specifically, classroom teachers who had volunteered to pilot a federal project to change pupils' sex-stereotyped attitudes regarding appropriate occupational roles for adults did not stereotype by sex. Using an established measure of sex-role stereotyping, teachers described ideal adult males and ideal adult females as being alike on 37 of 38 traditionally sex-specific bipolar personality traits. These same teachers were more likely to ascribe social value or desirability to traditional feminine characteristics than were subjects in previously reported investigations.

The teachers who participated in this study were by no means radicals nor were they subjected to extensive "brain washing" as part of the project. They had merely volunteered to participate in a federal project which had as a main goal to change pupils' attitudes regarding appropriate careers and social roles for men and women. The teachers attended several teacher workshops on the nature of sexism in the classroom and possible strategies for changing pupils' attitudes, and they cooperated in a pretest and posttest of pupil attitudes. During the approximately five month interval between pupil pretest and posttest, the teachers were to to anything which they felt would expand pupils' occupational and social role awareness. The data on teacher sex-role stereotypes were collected shortly after the posttest of pupils.

No doubt many classroom teachers, like teachers in this study, have begun to question the traditional sex-role stereotypes

and to change their own beliefs and attitudes about what men and women should ideally be like. This change in attitudes has come about as the result of three related occurences: the rapid rise and acceptance of the new women's movement; the response of concerned educators to the possible detrimental effect of sexism in the schools by producing a flood of books and articles in virtually every professional journal and by sponsoring school district in-service workshops; and by the passage of federal legislation (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1974) to end sex discrimination in education.

It seems worth documenting that while at least some select teachers' attitudes and expectations have changed, they have not changed in an extreme direction. While the volunteer teachers in this study reject sex stereotyped traits for ideal adults and redefine, for 10 of the 38 bipolar items, which pole in more socially desirable, they have not been radicalized in the direction of describing an ideal female who is a superwoman or an ideal male who is ineffectual. To their credit, they do not overreact and strive to create stereotypic male personalities in women's bodies or vice versa. Concerned teachers describe an androgynous ideal adult who possesses the best of both traditional stereotypes, an individual who is characterized by a blend of the warmth of the traditional stereotypic female and the competence of the traditional stereotypic male. In other words, both the ideal female and the ideal male are described as fully functioning human beings.

The non-sex-stereotyped attitudes reported by the 82 elementary teachers in this study represent a step forward in education in America. Concerned educators at all levels need to become aware of the changes in teacher attitudes which are taking place and the direction of those changes. In the interest of building on recent humanistic changes in society at large and the expressed commitment of public schools to providing educational equity,

educators need to consider the changes taking place in teachers' sex-role attitudes and to consider the implications for hiring new teachers, adopting textbooks, for developing curriculum, and for changes in school policy and organization.

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Table 1
Item Means, Standard Deviations, and t-values
On Teacher Tendency To Stereotype Questionnaire
For "Ideal Adult Male" and "Ideal Adult Female" Responses

Item No.	Masculine Stereotypic Trait[a]	Ideal Male M	Ideal Male SD	Ideal Female M	Ideal Female SD	t-value	Sig. of t[b]
1	Never cries	4.59	.65	4.33	.68	-3.29	.001
2	Not emotional	2.80	.67	2.76	.62	-0.56	
3	Hides emotions	2.42	.75	2.30	.76	-1.49	
4	Very direct	5.62	.92	5.56	.85	-0.67	
5	Not talkative	2.36	.60	2.53	.56	2.90	.005
6	Very logical	5.58	.81	5.56	.79	-0.17	
7	Very little need of security	4.41	.93	4.50	.76	0.93	
8	Very self-confident	5.68	.77	5.73	.84	0.67	
9	Knows way of world	3.73	1.30	3.53	1.41	-1.80	
10	Makes decisions easily	5.78	.80	5.69	.90	-1.01	
11	Not uncomfortable being aggressive	4.89	.86	4.84	.84	-0.43	
12	Very rough	2.23	.95	1.93	.95	-2.86	.005
13	Almost always acts as leader	3.60	.89	3.46	.86	-1.79	
14	Not interested in own appearance	2.99	.90	2.85	1.01	-1.49	
15	Likes math and science	5.22	.93	5.02	1.00	-2.79	.007
16	Not enjoy art and literature	2.88	1.22	2.79	1.14	-1.12	
17	Not dependent	3.45	1.22	3.46	1.18	0.07	
18	Very blunt	1.67	.96	1.54	.88	-1.79	
19	Skilled in business	4.22	1.06	4.07	1.05	-1.77	
20	Not easily influenced	4.88	.98	4.91	.92	0.41	
21	Very loud	2.76	.56	2.75	.55	-0.08	
22	Very competitive	4.85	.67	4.86	.71	0.12	
23	Sloppy in habits	1.64	.82	1.45	.79	-3.17	.002

Table 1 (continued)

Item No.	Masculine Stereotypic Trait[a]	Ideal Male M	Ideal Male SD	Ideal Female M	Ideal Female SD	t-value	Sig. of t[b]
24	Not excitable in minor crisis	4.04	1.15	3.93	1.15	-1.41	
25	Very active	5.30	.73	5.14	.76	-2.04	.044
26	Very adventurous	5.39	.79	5.25	.85	-1.82	
27	Never conceited about appearance	3.53	1.28	3.58	1.25	0.46	
28	Very worldly	3.00	.95	2.91	.87	-1.15	
29	Very aggressive	3.48	.64	3.41	.73	-1.01	
30	Feelings not easily hurt	4.86	.83	4.80	.88	-0.80	
31	Not aware of feelings of others	1.13	.83	1.09	.77	-0.65	
32	Able to separate feelings from ideas	4.27	.96	4.33	.99	-0.42	
33	Not express tender feelings	1.35	.78	1.31	.83	0.55	
34	Very objective	4.73	.85	4.70	.82	-0.36	
35	Very independent	5.30	.87	5.12	.82	-2.52	.014
36	Very dominant	3.27	.49	3.08	.53	2.77	.007
37	Very ambitious	4.16	.94	4.06	.96	1.82	
38	Not religious	2.23	1.15	2.23	1.16	0.0	

a Masculine pole is indicated for each of the 38 bipolar items. In the questionnaire items varied, at random, as to whether the female or the male pole was at the left end of the continuum (value = 1.0) or the right end (value = 7.0). In this table, items with the female stereotypic trait at the high end of the scale have been transformed. Thus for all items, the higher the score the closer the "ideal" is to the masculine stereotypic pole.

b A two-tailed t-test was used with degrees of freedom for each comparison = 81. The t value is reported for all $p < .05$. (In the original study by Rosenkrantz the 38 items were selected as stereotypic, from an initial pool of 122 items, based on the criterion of a significant difference between means beyond the .001 level of confidence.)

Table 2

Personality Traits of Teachers' Ideal Adult

Item No.	Personality Trait of Both Ideal Males and Ideal Females	Sex for which Traditionally Stereotypic[a]	Traditionally Considered to be Socially Desirable[a]
1	Never Cries	Male	Yes
2	Emotional	Female	No
3	Not hide emotions	Female	No
4	Direct	Male	Yes
5	Talkative	Female	Yes
6	Logical	Male	Yes
7	Little need for security	Male	No
8	Self-confident	Male	Yes
9	Not know way of world	Female	No
10	Makes decisions easily	Male	Yes
11	Not uncomfortable being aggressive	Male	Yes
12	Gentle	Female	Yes
13	Almost never acts as leader	Female	No
14	Interested in own appearance	Female	Yes
15	Likes math and science	Male	Yes
16	Enjoys art and literature	Female	Yes
17	Dependent	Female	No
18	Tactful	Female	Yes
19	Skilled in business	Male	Yes

Table 2 (con't)

Item No.	Personality Trait of Both Ideal Males and Ideal Females	Sex for which Traditionally Stereotypic[a]	Traditionally Considered to be Socially Desirable[a]
20	Not easily influenced	Male	Yes
21	Quiet	Female	Yes
22	Competitive	Male	Yes
23	Neat in habits	Female	Yes
24	Not excitable in minor crisis (M) / Excitable in minor crisis (F)[b]	Male/Female	Yes/No
25	Active	Male	Yes
26	Adventurous	Male	Yes
27	Conceited about appearance	Female	No
28	Home-oriented	Female	No
29	Not aggressive	Female	No
30	Feelings not easily hurt	Male	Yes
31	Aware of feelings of others	Female	Yes
32	Able to separate feelings from ideas	Male	Yes
33	Expresses tender feelings	Female	Yes
34	Objective	Male	Yes
35	Independent	Male	Yes
36	Submissive	Female	No

Table 2 (con't)

Item No.	Personality Trait of Both Ideal Males and Ideal Females	Sex for which Traditionally Stereotypic [a]	Traditionally Considered to be Socially Desirable [a]
37	Ambitious	Male	Yes
38	Religious	Female	Yes

[a]Source: Rosenkrantz et al. (1968)

[b]Teachers' ideal was sex-specific, as indicated.

Notes

1. While it is standard practice to analyze results by sex of subject, the focus of the study was on volunteer classroom teachers, as a group, and not on female or male teachers in particular. All results are thus reported for female and male teachers combined. The decision to not differentiate by sex of teacher in the final analysis was substantiated by a series of 72 *t*-tests comparing the male teachers' means for the 38 ideal female traits and the 38 ideal male traits with the female teachers' means for each set of 38 traits. By chance alone, one would expect that at least 3 of the *t*-tests would yield a two-tailed *p*-value of $p \leq .05$; in fact, not one of the 72 *t*-tests was significant at $p \leq .05$.